



Iran National  
Carpet Center





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Department of Training and Research  
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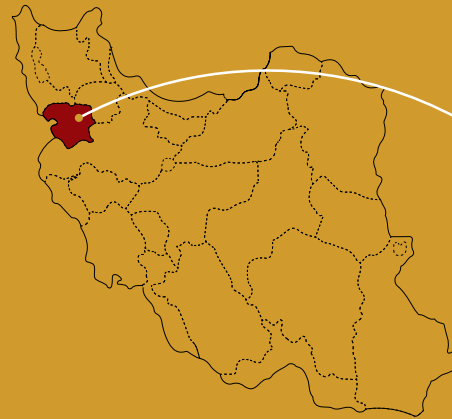
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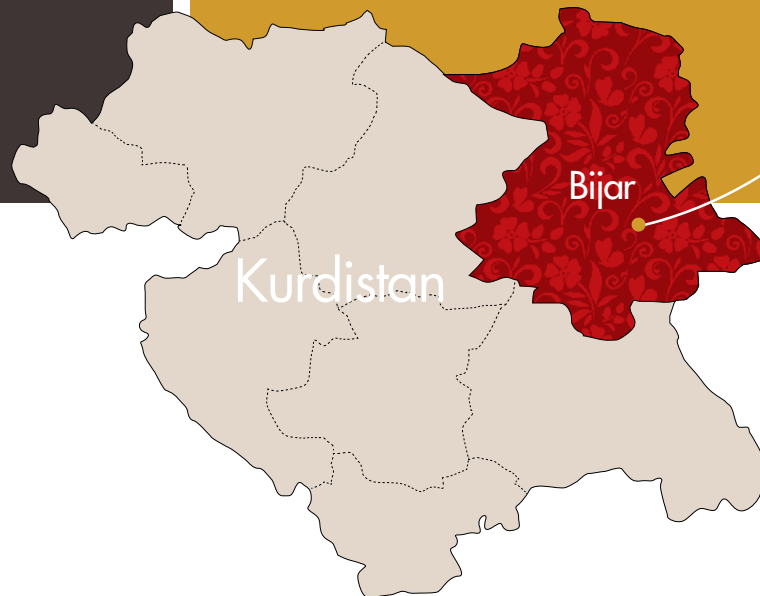


IN HIS NAME

# Heritage, Environment and Tourism



Bijar<sup>1</sup> (Bidjar) is a small city located on top of the Zagros mountains in western Iran, at the elevation of 1940 meters. Its neighbors include Zanjan province (from northeastern border), the city of Takaab in west Azerbaijan (from northwest side), the city of Ghorveh (from south), a small part of Hamedan province (from east), Sanandaj and Divan darreh (from west). (Image No.1)





▲ Image No.5





▲ Image No.2

The moment you arrive and take your first steps in the city, you'd feel the enchantment of the bluest of skies and the whitest of clouds. The cold breeze upon your skin and the shining touches of the Sun bring you a sense of joy like no other.  
(Image No.2/3/4)

The spoken language of Bijar is mostly Kurdish but there is also Turkish and Farsi spoken among the people.  
(Image No.5/6)



▲ Image No.3



▲ Image No.6

More than a hundred years ago this city had another name. It was called "Garus". The word "Garus" is conducted of two different Pahlavi words. One being "Gar", which means mountains, and the other being "Vas", which means many. As a result, in Pahlavi language the word "Garus" means "many mountains". There are some other theories about the city's name. One theory suggests that "Garus" is the other name of a group of people known as "Gaduz" or "Kadus" who lived in the Iranian plateau, in the location of today's Guilan, before Aryans. After a while, a group of them decided to travel along "Ghazal Osan" river



▲ Image No.4

and go south. They had gone so far to the point where they found the source of the river (which is located near Bijar) and decided to take residence there. Due to that, the place was named after its residents. Gradually "Gaduz" changed to "Garus". Some people believe that a group of people called Garus, of the nomads, chose the area in which Bijar is located today and since they were the dominant group of that area, they named it after themselves.

There are 2 different theories about the name "Bijar" as well. Some believe it is consisted of two Kurdish words. One being "Bi" which means the willow tree; and the other one is "Jar" which means field in Kurdish. It is assumed that the name was taken after the many willow trees that grow in the area.

The second theory suggests that Bijar was named after the herbals that grow in the area. One of them being "Haft-e-Bijar" or "Khoshk-e-Bijar".

One of the oldest landmarks of this area is "Dezh-e-setorg" which means the great stronghold. It is also called the fortress of Ghamchaghay. Ghamchaghay is the village in which this fortress is located. Historians have indicated that the great stronghold was constructed nearly 3000 years B.C.  
(Image No.7)



▲ Image No.7

Image No.2/3/4: Bijar's wildlife and nature. Photo by: Jamshid Farajvand, Fars News, Reza Gol Mirzaie

Image No.5/6: Kurdish clothing. (This photo was taken from Kurdistan: The green emerald

Image No.7: The fortress of Ghamchaghay (Photo by Jamshid Farajvand)



# Handicrafts

Creating beautiful pieces of handicrafts in Bijar was quite common and still is. The main income of the families in Bijar comes from agriculture and animal husbandry. In this due, creating handmade stuff and trading them was essential to make ends meet. Gelim, Jajim, woolen washclothes, Tache, flavour tablecloth, gloves and the last but not least the hand-woven rugs were also quite popular in Bijar and nearby villages like the famous Cheshme-ye-rubah and Shirkosh.



▲ Image No.8

This ancient landmark was used as a crucial base during the Sassanid, Median and Parthian eras.

Alongside its magnificent natural beauties, there are numerous other historical landmarks in Bijar, such as "Pol-e-salavat abad" (The bridge of Salavat Abad), Ghal'e Banoo, Tappe Ghal'e (also known as Changiz Ghal'e), Bana-e-Sangi-e-ooch gonbad. An estimated number of 60 landmarks are located in Bijar. (Image No.8)



▲ Image No.9

Image No.8: The bridge of Salavat Abad  
(Photo by Jamshid Farajvand)

Image No.9: Pictorial rug from Bidjar. Photo from Persian pictorial carpets



# History of rug weaving

The most famous and artistic achievement of the people of Bijar is rug. A handwoven masterpiece that is called "The Iron Carpet" and is well known for its resistance which represents the endurance and the hard work of the people.

Unfortunately there are not many historical evidences and documents about the history of hand weaving in Bijar. But it is assumed that during the time of the two famous rulers of Bijar, named Hosseinali khan Amir Nezam and Alireza Khan Garrusi, carpet weaving was



limited but the quality of weaving and dying was undeniably high. Many of the carpets of this area which have inscriptions were woven by the order of these two former rulers and today those carpets are kept in private collections and museums. Some of these carpets are in Tehran carpet museum and the date between 1921 to 1931 are written on them as inscription. By inspecting some of the old pieces we can conclude that weaving of big clothed carpets was quite common. These great carpets were woven by the order of the grandees and were given away as gifts to specific people.

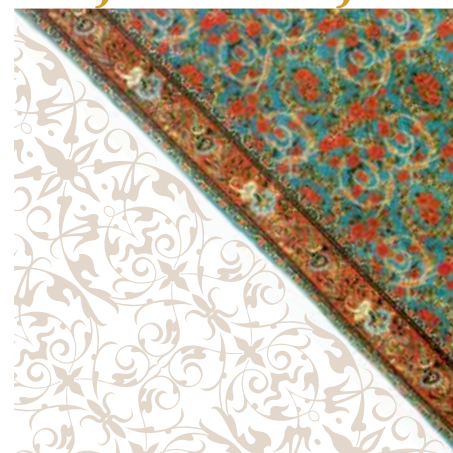
Due to its unique geographical position, during the first world war Bijar was attacked first by the Russians and then by the Ottomans. This incident brought tough times for the people and thus the weaving was troubled. However during the 20th century and before the beginning of the second world war by placing many weaving machines, a phase of reviving the art of weaving had begun, just to be demolished by the shadow of World War II. This situation lasted for a while.

"In 1948, I was going from Hamedan to Bijar and in spite of all the damages I expected to see some signs of weaving and revival of this art, but I found just one loom in the entire city," said Cecil Edwards. About 10 years before stating this, he had mentioned 10000 active weaving machines in Bijar. After 1961, by a significant improvement in the financial status and the ideas of talented young artists, the weaving centers of Bijar began to work again. This was a new beginning for the Iron carpet which was still resistant and was carrying beautiful figures alongside unimaginable and vibrant colors. These qualities made Bijar's carpet quite famous around the globe.

However there are some similarities between the designs and figures of Bijar and Sanan-

daj rugs, but the weavers of these two regions managed to establish some unique designs for each of these two rugs. Due to that and since there are clear differences between the weaving styles, experts categorize these rugs in two different categories. It is also worth mentioning that Bijar rugs have the highest number of designs, patterns and figures among Persian rugs. The way of dying Bijar rugs makes it different from the neighbors like Kermanshah and Hamedan.

## Designs of Bijar Rugs



The most important designs used in Bijar rugs are:

1. Medallion corner Including the ones only with Medallions, the ones without any Medallions and the ones with patternless fields.
2. Repetitive patterns (specially the old and famous Mina Khani).
3. Hunting design
4. Prayer design
5. Vase design (specially the famous Zello-Soltani)

# Patterns of Bijar Rugs



- The most important patterns used in Bijar rugs are:
- Eslimi (specially the ones that look like a dragon's mouth)
  - Roses
  - Golfarang
  - Shah Abbasi flowers
  - Herati (specially the famous and well known Herati fish)
  - Botteh
  - Trees (specially the Weeping Willows)
  - Flowering shrubs

These patterns and designs are quite famous and well-known; but there are some other traditional and common ones which are combinations of local patterns and designs. These are called by other names. Such as:

- Horn pattern. Which was among the most famous and used patterns in old Bijar carpets.
- Golvakili design. This one is a pattern which is used by the weavers of both Sanandaj and Bijar. Its main pattern consists of repetitive patterns.
- Samanbar Khanom design. It is presumed this pattern was used by a lady called Samanbar for the first time and it was named after her. Its main pattern consists of Medallion corner.
- Mostofi design. Its main design is repetitive. In this design, Eslimi spirals are mostly covered by lots of branches, flowers and leaves. This is known to be the innovation of the weavers of Bijar. This design could be found in the fields of Bijar, Sarugh and Farahan (in Markazi province).
- Sardari design. This design is much alike to the famous Safavid Polonaise carpets in which an Eslimi design which looks like a dragon's mouth is repeated horizontally.

One of the noteworthy points of Bijar designs and patterns is the fact that the old weavers of the region used the patterns and designs of small woven pieces (usually less than a square meter) which are known as Ornak, as sources of ideas. Each Ornak had a combination of different patterns and designs. At this point, the weavers memorized the patterns of different Ornak and put them together in very different forms which

▲ Image No.10

Image No.10: Parde-e-Hassan Abad, Photos originally printed in Kurdish carpet



made a completely new and unique set of patterns in the weavers' minds. This way the weavers were able to generate and visualize an exact and detailed image of what they are about to weave. In the end they began to implement that pattern in the scales of their choosing. Today this method is forgotten among the weavers as they weave based on designs of other designers. Today the old Ornaks are known as highly valuable monuments of the traditional weaving in Bijar. Some collectors tend to add these Ornaks to their collections.

It is assumed by the scholars and experts that Mina Khani and the weeping willow designs which are used in some other types of Persian carpets were originated from Bijar. They also believe that the design of the 19th century Bijar carpets were affected by the vase and repetitive designs and also Shah Abbasi patterns of the 16th and 17th century carpets woven in the central Iran. Some others believe that the famous Bijar crab pattern was also inspired by the same pattern found during the 18th century in Caucasus. Some carpet scholars believe that the Medallion corner of Bijar carpet (which includes some Eslimi designs as well) reminds them of those found in the first Oshak (a region in central Anatolia) carpets.

Donald Wilber, the well-known carpet scholar from England, classifies the designs of the Bijar rugs in 5 different categories:

- Bijar (Garus) designed rugs. Also known as Azarakhsh (Lightning bolt) design.
- Rugs with Herati fish designs, Botteh, Mina Khani, Roses, Mostofi flowers And Sardari which are divided in two different categories of modern and rural carpets.
- Pictorial rugs.
- Carpets with repetitive designs.
- Gelims (carpets which designs inspired by those on Gelims)

The old Bijar rugs were divided in 3 different categories under the tags of modern (city) rugs, rural rugs and nomad rugs but the latest could not be found today due to the change of the lifestyle.



▲ Image No.11



▲ Image No.12



▲ Image No.13



▲ Image No.14



▲ Image No.15



▲ Image No.16



▲ Image No.17



▲ Image No.18



▲ Image No.19



▲ Image No.20



▲ Image No.21



▲ Image No.22

Image No.11: Mirza Ali flower

Image No.12: Golvakili

Image No.13: Mostafi roses

Image No.14: Repetitive design (with the looks of a dragon's mouth) / Photos originally printed in Kurdish carpet

Image No.15: Herati fish pattern , Photo by Mohsen Zeyn-ol-Abedini

Image No.16: Medallion corner without any patterns in the field / Photo was originally printed in a research in Persian carpet

Image No.17: Herati fish pattern / Photo originally printed in the magnificent carpets of Dafineh museum

Image No.18: A small Ornak from Bijar. Photo from Persian rugs

Image No.19: An Ornak with Medallion corner design and teapots on the border.

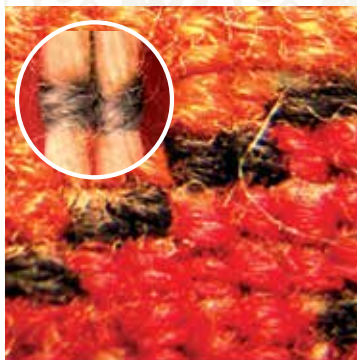
Image No.20/21: The carpets of Bijar's Great mosque with Medallion corner design and Herati pattern. Photo by Mohsen Zeyn-ol-Abedini

Image No.22: Bijar Gelim. Photo from An Introduction to Kurdish Rugs and Other Weavings



# Technical characteristics

The weavers use symmetrical knots and in the old carpets there are 450 to 800 knots per dm<sup>2</sup> and today this number increases to 1700 and in some rugs up to 5000 knots per dm<sup>2</sup>.



The old weavers of the area were able to weave quite large carpets with incredible length but today they don't weave such large carpets. The reason is found in the way they prepared and finalized the warps on the looms. The weavers used to arrange the warps on the ground in the order and style which they had in mind. After they made sure that the warps were arranged properly, they began to put them up on the looms. But today they don't do that preparation. They simply put up the warps on the looms and do the arranging and finalizing simultaneously.

The style of putting the wefts on the loom is quite special itself. Because in the old traditional way, they used 3 wefts. They arranged those wefts in a special order in which the second weft was thin and the first and the third were thick. Today they use 2 wefts instead of 3. The style of beating on the wefts in Bijar is quite different compared to those in other places. The difference is in the numbers and the strength behind the strokes. This makes the Bijar carpet truly the Iron carpet.

## Colors

One of the qualities which makes Bijar rugs unique is their combination of colors.

There are many bright colors used in the weaving of Bijar carpets. Such as golden, beige, pink, floral white, white, salmon, dark red, red and different shades of green in a Navy background. Today they use less than 27 colors and a few of them like green and golden are used less and less every day. Different shades of red and pink are growing more and more on the people of the area each day.







▲ Image No.23

Image No.23: Natural dyes. Iranian Town & Village Carpets and Rugs

## Ingredients

The old Bijar carpets were completely made out of wool. Some say the reason is that the weavers used the wool of the sheep of a special type which could be found only in Bijar and their wool had great quality. Sometimes they used cotton as a material for the second weft and today the weavers use only cotton for the warps and wefts. Silk was rarely used in the Bijar rugs, whether old or new. About the dying in Bijar, both natural and chemical dying are quite popular among the weavers. In the process of natural dying, Madder, Esparak, the leaf of the grape tree, Gandal, Ja Shir, pomegranates and walnuts are used.

## Size

The sizes of the rugs in Bijar are just the same as the ones of other areas of Iran. There are different varieties in the size of Bijar rugs. From the small ones (90x60 cm) to the huge ones (20 to 30 square meters). In some rare occasions 50 square meter carpets have also been seen in Bijar.

Weaving runners was also common in Bijar and still is.



▲ Image No.24



▲ Image No.25



▲ Image No.26

Image No.24: Comb

Image No.25: A special weaving knife



▲ Image No.27

Image No.26: Preparing a loom for weaving in Bijar

Image No.27: Rug weaving in Shiva village. Photo by: Nasrollah Kasrayian





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